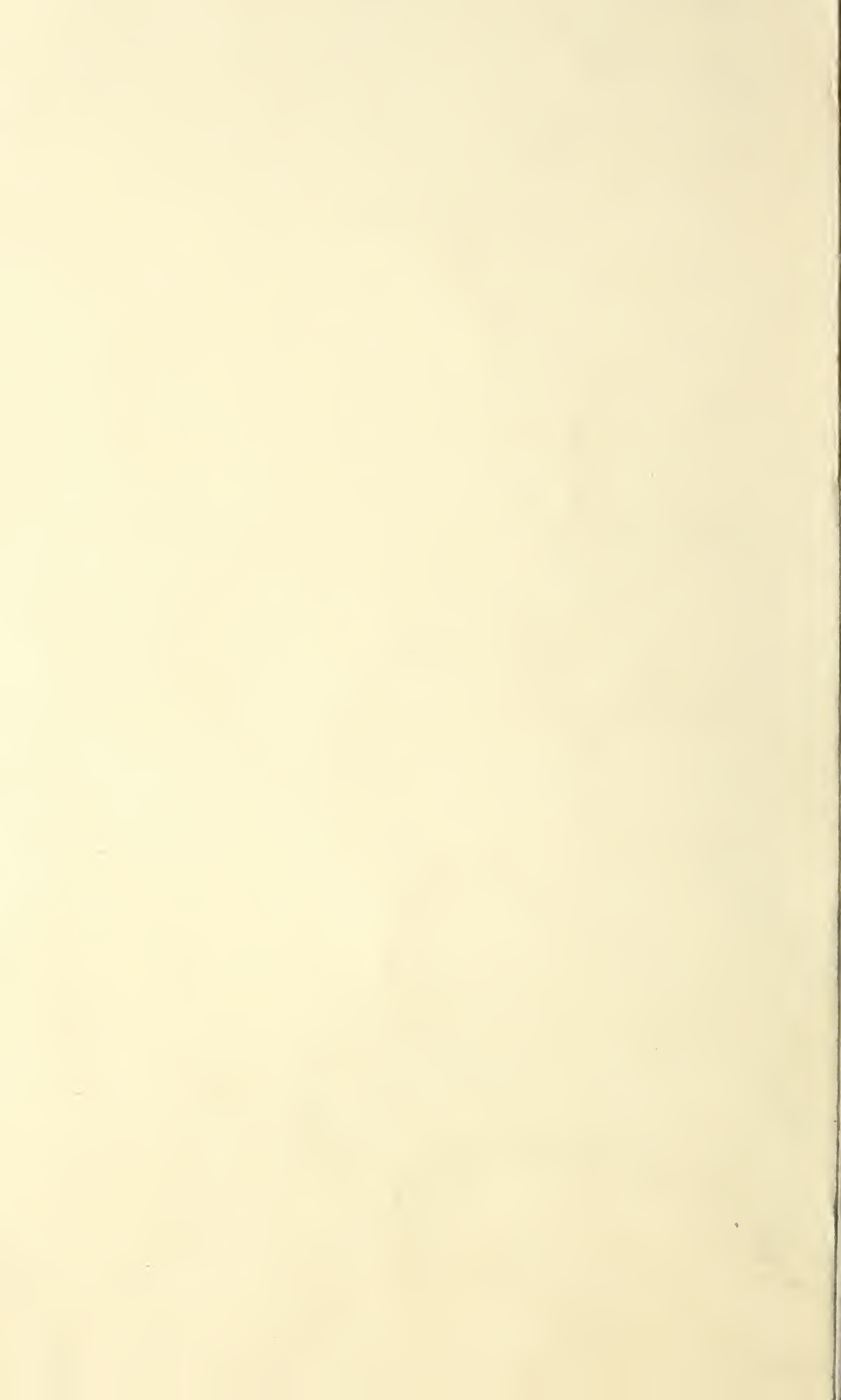


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# SLIP COVERS

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By BESS M. VIEMONT . . . . ASSISTANT SPECIALIST IN TEXTILES  
DIVISION OF TEXTILES AND CLOTHING, BUREAU OF HOME ECONOMICS

SLIP COVERS have become an accepted part of home furnishing and decoration. They may be used throughout the year in almost every room in the house. There was a time when they were used merely as protective coverings in the summer when the rugs and draperies were put away. No thought was then given to their decorative possibilities.

Covers, trimly fitted and in attractive colors, have now replaced the plain, colorless, and often poorly tailored ones. So many materials are available to-day in delightful blues, greens, and violets that the home may be made restful and cool looking in the summer, while the warm reds and yellows give a cozy, friendly atmosphere in winter. One slip cover may be used for all seasons if the design in the material combines both warm and cool colors.

## *Uses of Slip Covers*

Slip covers serve many purposes. They may be purely decorative, but more often they are for furniture protection. Todies of various materials have been used on the backs and arms of chairs and settees to protect them from soil and wear. They were usually white or a very light color. When placed on dark furniture they were extremely conspicuous and gave the room a spotted appearance. But now that more attention is given to unity in home furnishings, slip covers are replacing the tidies and are serving many more practical purposes.

Simple, washable slip covers on the easy chairs in the present-day living room permit the entire family to share its comforts. In homes where there are small children covers that can be quickly removed and tubbed are almost a necessity and are wise purchases if the furniture is to be kept looking well. Removable coverings will lessen the wear and tear from soiled hands and playthings, from work clothes and everyday use. At the same time they keep in good condition the upholstery and the wood finish of any pieces of furniture that will not withstand hard usage, and make them serve a practical as well as an ornamental purpose.

Slip covers may prolong the life of the comfortable chairs and davenports. The thrifty home maker can make slips to protect them or to cover the worn places. In this way they extend the period of usefulness of furniture already on hand and help to tide over lean periods in the family income when the purchase of new upholstery or new furniture would be entirely out of the question.

When the upholstery of a chair or a davenport is in good condition but out of harmony in color and design with other things in the room, slip covers are sometimes used to produce more attractive combinations. Since the cover will be a permanent part of the furniture, materials that resemble upholstery may be chosen, or a different kind may be selected and used for contrast.

## *Selection of Materials*

The supply of suitable materials, colors, and designs in the stores is so large that it is often difficult to make a selection. Fabrics that harmonize with other furnishings in the room usually cost no more than those that do not; but frequently they look different on the counter from the way they do fitted on a chair. In choosing between two designs of equal price, the home maker should select the one which fits in best with the designs in the rugs and curtains. There are small informal chintz patterns for the bedroom; dignified conventional designs in cretonne and hand-blocked linen for the living room; waterproof gingham and percale for the dining room and the breakfast nook; and bold stripes for the sun parlor or the porch. Whenever it is at all possible samples 1 or 2 yards long should be tried in the room before the material is purchased. If satisfactory figured ones are not obtainable it may be necessary to buy a plain fabric.

Unless the slip cover is to be used only for one season it is usually more economical to buy the best material that can be afforded. The very inexpensive ones fade quickly both in the light and in laundering. As a rule, they are filled with dressing and finishing materials that wash out and leave a coarse, flimsy, loosely woven



cloth. Better colors and designs are found in higher quality fabrics, and although the initial cost may be somewhat greater they are attractive as long as they last. Even though slip covers may be used only during certain seasons it is advisable to buy cretonne, semiglaized or unglazed chintz, gingham, percale, or poplin for them. These materials are easy to work with, moderate in price, suitable in color and design for any room in the house, and they will always look well. If the cover is to be used all year and a material that closely resembles upholstery is desired, rep, crash, cotton damask, galatea, drapery sateen, hand-blocked linen, denim, or tapestry offer a wide range of colors and patterns and suggest interesting possibilities for decorative uses.

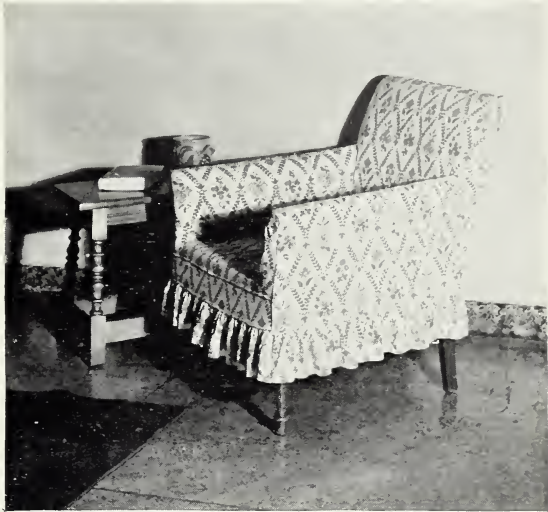


FIGURE 1. *The narrow gathered ruffle finishes the lower edge but in no way interferes with cleaning under the chair*

Slip covers often wrinkle badly because they can not be as tightly stretched and securely fastened to the furniture frame as upholstery can be. The heavier and more firmly woven materials, such as denim, galatea, rep, and upholsterer's sateen, will wrinkle less than thinner fabrics. Cretonne, crash, hand-blocked linen, and cotton damask will retain their newness longer than gingham, percale, or chintz. The wrinkling of any material is influenced by the amount of sizing. Those that are filled with starch muss easily, but those with very little dressing look well for a long time. If materials are washable, much of their original freshness can be restored.

Although figured materials will show wrinkles less than plain ones, it may be necessary to choose the plainer fabrics for the same general principles should be followed in selecting slip covers as in choosing curtains. When the walls are figured the furniture coverings must be plain or so finely patterned that the design gives the impression of texture. A very fine, inconspicuous stripe or check is permissible in rooms where definite designs would be entirely out of the question. In rooms with plain walls and floor coverings figured materials are the proper choice and offer unlimited possibilities for individuality. Plain fabrics would be monotonous, but patterned ones will give character.

Besides harmonizing with the walls and floor coverings, materials for furniture covers must be in scale with the room and the piece of furniture on which they are to be used. For example, large rooms and large pieces of furniture need materials sturdy in construction and design and rich in color; small rooms and small pieces of furniture require fabrics of smaller designs and lighter in texture and color. (Fig. 1.)



If the cover is made from material with large designs that have to be centered or that have a definite up and down, additional yardage must be purchased. The quantity depends upon the size of the figure and upon the closeness of the repeat. If the slip cover is finished with a pleated or gathered ruffle as shown on the front page or in Figure 1 more cloth will be needed than for a cover similar to the one in Figure 2.

For the ruffle calculate the number of widths by measuring around the chair at the place where it will join the body of the cover. On Figure 2 this distance is 100 inches. Three widths, therefore, are necessary to reach around the chair. For gathered fullness allow twice that many widths and three times as many for pleating. Multiply the number of widths by the desired depth of the ruffle to obtain the total amount needed and make additional allowance for hemming and matching the pattern. Thus, for a 7-inch gathered valance on this chair, 42 inches



FIGURE 3. Pin fittings and well-marked seam lines insure accurate stitching, well-fitted covers, and eliminate guesswork

are required for the ruffle and at least one-half yard more must be allowed for hems and matching. This means that  $1\frac{2}{3}$  yards more cloth must be bought for this kind of a cover than for the one in Figure 2. Sometimes the ruffle extends just across the two sides and the front, and the back is left plain, which, of course, reduces the amount of material needed.

In general, the procedure just outlined may be followed when estimating the quantity of material required for any slip cover. However, slight variations may be necessary to fit the particular style of furniture and the type of slip cover desired. For the small pads on the chair in Figure 4, short remnants are often obtainable. Both sides may be alike or contrasting material may be used on one side to give variety. In Figure 5 twice the depth of the chair plus the length of the chair cushion from the front to the back equals the quantity of material needed. The side pieces for the seat can be cut from the long strips left after cutting the large ones.

A contrasting color may be used for seam bindings or cordings and repeated on the covers for the removable cushions of chairs and davenports. To conserve





FIGURE 4. Small pads of gaily colored material are often more attractive than slip covers on straight chairs. They can be quickly attached by narrow fabric straps which fasten around parts of the chair as shown in the small illustration

closely fitted. A sliding fastener (fig. 7, A) makes a desirable closing for the cover in Figure 2. It is placed in the seam that joins the outside part of the back to the piece that covers the outside of the arm. Figure 7, B and C, illustrates the necessary openings if a 1-piece slip cover is preferred for a chair similar to the one in Figure 5.

It is always advisable to shrink washable materials before making them into slip covers. The attractiveness of removable coverings is largely dependent upon good fit, and haphazard allowances for shrinkage are never reliable.

When making covers from plain materials or from fabrics with small reversible designs the cloth may be laid over the chair and cut without a pattern. To make the cover in Figure 2, start at the back and let the cut edge of the material come about 3

the more expensive material a cheaper fabric, such as an unbleached muslin, osnaburg, or percale, is often substituted for the back of the cover and for the part under the loose cushions. The slip-cover material must extend far enough so that the sham does not show. Although this plan is economical, it necessitates placing the furniture against the wall and is not generally recommended.

Well-fitted slip covers require a placket or opening. Its position depends entirely upon the piece of furniture that is being covered and upon the type of fastener that will be used. Snaps, hooks and eyes, or buttons allow an opening to gap if much strain is put upon it. For this reason they are more satisfactory when the cover fits somewhat loosely as in Figures 1 and 6, or where the placket is inconspicuous. (Fig. 5.) When the cover is a substitute for upholstery it must be very



FIGURE 5. Plackets in slip covers must be as inconspicuous as possible. This cover opens under the arms and across the lower edge. The inset shows the details of the closing



inches below the upholstery. At the top of the chair pin the cloth to the permanent covering to hold it firmly in place. Allow a 1-inch tuck at L and smooth the material over the front of the chair. When stretching the material in place make sure that the filling or crosswise threads are kept parallel to the floor; otherwise the cover will be crooked and will fit badly after laundering. Tuck in the 4-inch allowance at CD and bring the material to EK. Mark the seam line with pins and cut off about an inch beyond the mark. Next stretch the material over the inside of the arms. Tuck in the 2-inch allowance at CE and pin to the chair covering along the top of the arm. Fit in the side pieces, allowing 3 inches at the lower edge for finishing. Put in the small pieces on the front of the arm and



FIGURE 6. This cover illustrates the proper spacing of large design repeats. The pleated ruffle which finishes the lower edge carries out the vertical lines in the figure

across the front of the chair. Trim off any extra material, leaving about 1-inch allowance for all seams. When cutting the seat cover along CE and DK, 2 inches must be allowed so that there will be a total tuck in of 4 inches between the seat and the arm. After all pieces have been modeled and the cover is completely pinned together (fig. 3) it is ready for basting and seaming.

The kind of seams depends largely upon the material and the finished appearance desired, but in any case the construction must be durable enough to withstand the strain put upon it. French seams are preferable to plain ones, because the double stitching increases strength and covers the raw edges. Often seams are stitched on the right side, trimmed to one-fourth inch, and covered with a binding. Cording that contrasts with the slip-cover material (fig. 5) or matches it (fig. 6) may be used as a seam finish. When the material is too heavy for cording seams may be made as on the arm of the chair in Figure 2. They are stitched on the wrong side about three-sixteenths of an inch outside the marked seam line, turned, and stitched again on the right side. This second row comes on the seam line and gives a corded effect. The raw edges are trimmed to one-half inch and overcast.

When making slip covers for the first time or from material with large figures it is advisable to model a pattern from old sheets or from similar large pieces of old

cloth before cutting into the new. The pattern is made in precisely the same manner as outlined for the chair cover. Such a guide will be particularly helpful in calculating yardage and in spacing the designs.

The cover for the davenport in Figure 6 cuts with the least waste from 36-inch cloth. Each of the pieces for the cushions and back sections is cut from one width of material, which leaves a strip wide enough for the boxing around the sides and backs of the cushions. The back sections correspond with the three cushions and are joined by cording of the same fabric, but the actual construction follows the same general plan previously outlined.

Loose cushions should be covered separately, and the covering should be the same style as that of the cushion. For example, covers for boxed cushions must also be boxed and never made merely by sewing two pieces of cloth together. Since covers are taken off frequently one seam should be left open. It may be sewed by hand after the cushion is inserted, or it may be finished as a placket and closed with snaps, hooks and eyes, or buttons. A sliding fastener in the seam provides another very practical method of closing. It eliminates mashed snaps or hooks and broken buttons and closes the opening quickly and securely.

Although making slip covers is by no means a simple task, an amateur can produce attractive results if enough thought is given to the choice of material, proper placing of design repeats, good fitting, and strong seams.

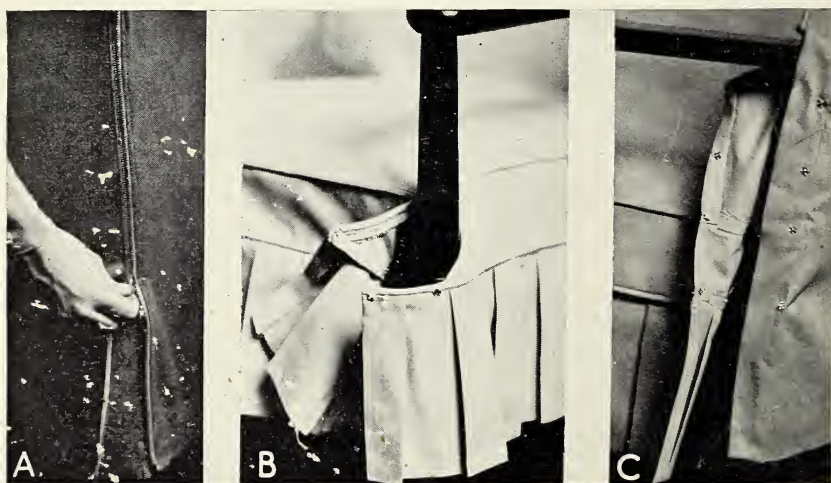


FIGURE 7. An opening is essential in all slip covers to insure close fitting: A, The sliding fastener closes the placket in Figure 2; B and C, uncovered arms require an opening around the post and the side back. Snaps make satisfactory fasteners for these plackets

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